

Romans 8:15–17

15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the

Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”

16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Galatians 3:25–4:7

25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian,

26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.

27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

1 I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything,

2 but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father.

3 In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world.

4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,

5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

6 And because you are sons, **God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”**

7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Adoption

Introduction: Ephesians 1:4-5 makes it clear that God’s plan from the beginning was to make us adopted sons.

Jerry Bridges writes in his book: “Who Am I?” (pg. 42)

- Justification secures our legal relationship with God as judge. In justification God declares that we are righteous in Christ.
- Adoption secures our family relationship with God. Through adoption God makes us his children.

He goes on to state –

“ALTHOUGH WE DISTINGUISH BETWEEN JUSTIFICATION AND ADOPTION, WE SHOULD NEVER SEPARATE THEM!”

Theologian Wayne Grudem helps clarify this distinction when he writes, “Moreover, God could have given us justification without the privileges of adoption into his family, for he could have forgiven our sins and given us right legal standing before him without making us his children. It is important to realize this because it helps us to recognize how great are our privileges in adoption. **Regeneration** has to do with our spiritual life within. **Justification** has to do with our standing before God’s law. But **adoption** has to do with our relationship with God as our Father, and in adoption we are given many of the greatest blessings that we will know for all eternity. When we begin to realize the excellence of these blessings, and when we appreciate that God has no obligation to give us any of them, then we will be able to exclaim with the apostle John, “See *what love* the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are” (1 John 3:1).”

The Privileges of Adoption

One of the greatest privileges of our adoption is being able to speak to God and *relate to him as a good and loving Father*.

The fact that God relates to us as Father shows very clearly that he *loves us* (1 John 3:1), that he *understands us* (“As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust” [Ps. 103:13–14])¹

It is in the context of this relationship with God as our heavenly Father that we are to understand the prayer that Jesus told his disciples to pray daily, “*Our Father* who art in heaven ... *forgive us our sins* as we also have forgiven those who sin against us”

The privilege of being *led by the Holy Spirit* is also a benefit of adoption. Paul indicates that this is a moral benefit whereby the Holy Spirit puts in us desires to obey God and live according to his will. He says, “All who are *led by the Spirit of God* are sons of God” (Rom. 8:14)²

Related to the fatherly discipline of God is the fact that, as children of God and joint heirs with Christ, we have the *privilege of sharing both in his sufferings and in his subsequent glory*. Just as it was “necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory” (Luke 24:26), so God gives us the privilege of

¹ Wayne A. Grudem, [Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine](#) (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 739.

² Wayne A. Grudem, [Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine](#) (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 740.

walking the same path that Christ walked, enduring sufferings in this life that we may also receive great glory in the life to come: “if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, *provided we suffer with him* in order that we may also be *glorified with him*” (Rom. 8:17).³

This concept of the church as God’s family should give us a new perspective on the work of the church; it is “family work,” and the various members of the family never should compete with each other or hinder one another in their efforts, but should encourage one another and be thankful for whatever good or whatever progress comes to any member of the family, for all are contributing to the good of the family and the honor of God our Father.

This is why we have had a Connection Hour class regarding the ‘one anothers’ etc. Our work as a body is relationship oriented *because* of our adoption into the family of God.

Items to explore:

1. Spirit of slavery vs. Spirit of adoption

2. Our cry – “Abba, Father”

3. Slave -> Son -> Heir

³ Wayne A. Grudem, [*Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*](#) (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 740–741.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. Look back over the list of privileges that come with our adoption as God's children. Had you previously thought of these as automatically yours because you had been born again? Can you describe what our eternal life would be like if we had regeneration and justification and many of the other privileges that come with salvation, but no adoption into God's family? Now how do you feel about the fact that God has adopted you into his family compared with the way you felt before studying this subject?
2. Sometimes people who have had unloving or cruel earthly fathers have found that their background creates difficulty in their thinking about God and relating to him as a heavenly Father. How can Hebrews 12:10; Matthew 7:11; and Luke 11:13, which contrast sinful earthly fathers with our perfect Father in heaven, be of help in that situation? Might 1 Peter 1:18 be helpful in this situation as well? What can a person who has had a cruel and unloving earthly father do to gain a better and better appreciation of who God is and what kind of Father he is?
3. Do you sense any discrimination against Christians of other races or other social or economic positions? Can you understand how the doctrine of adoption should obliterate such distinctions in the church (see Gal. 3:26–28)? Can you also see how the doctrine of adoption means that neither men nor women should think of the other sex as more important or less important in the church (see Gal. 3:28)?⁴

⁴ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 742–743.

Questions for Further Study:

- In the human family, when one of the children commits a crime and is publicly punished for it, the entire family suffers shame. On the other hand, when a family member is honored for an outstanding achievement, the entire family is proud and rejoices. How does this analogy of events in a human family make you feel about your own personal level of holiness in life, and the way it reflects on the other members of your spiritual family? How does it make you feel about the need for personal holiness among your brothers and sisters in the church? Do you personally have a strong inward desire to imitate your heavenly Father in your conduct (Eph. 5:1; 1 Peter 1:14–16)?

- Think of the people who are members of Kossuth. Has this study helped you to think of them more as your brothers and sisters (or if they are older, as those who are like “fathers” and “mothers” to you)? How do you think an added appreciation of this idea of the church as a family would be helpful to our fellowship? How could you encourage a greater appreciation of this idea?